

Real Food For Kids Applauds Fairfax County Public Schools' Selection of Marshall High School for Pilot Program

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Marshall High School in Falls Church, VA has been selected by Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) for a special program in conjunction with FCPS' Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). The school will be the home of a pilot program for preparing fresh meals for students. Marshall is currently undergoing a three-year renovation project which allows time to properly plan the kitchen and make essential equipment purchases.

School Board member for the Providence District, Patty Reed, where the school is situated, stated: "I am thrilled that we are conducting this innovative pilot program at Marshall High School. I applaud all involved in taking the concept of 'healthier meals/healthier kids' and making it a reality."

Marshall High School PTA Board Member Mary Pope, stated, "Marshall is a great fit for this project. The principal, Jay Pearson, is focused on a healthy, enriched environment for all students at the school. Having fresh food available only enhances their daily potential to be productive and feel good."

JoAnne Hammermaster, President of Real Food For Kids, is very pleased with the potential of the program. "This pilot is a very big step for our community. This will give FNS an opportunity to be creative with preparing fresh meals, to get feedback from students, and to work on the logistics of potential production and distribution to other local schools. We are excited about the future possibilities for the entire county and we are grateful to the school board for their unanimous support of this program." In response to rising childhood obesity and diabetes rates, Real Food For Kids has been working to encourage Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) to provide fresh, whole foods made from scratch.

Real Food For Kids has often reminded the public that FCPS schools once served fresh food made from scratch. However, most school kitchens around the country are now warming kitchens, including Fairfax County, whose menus consist of frozen, processed food which is reheated before serving. This trend is slowly reversing itself as many school districts try to improve the quality of their food for students.

Retrofitting kitchens costs money, which is a roadblock for many programs. "There are many examples of how school districts have been able to accomplish the transition to scratch cooking. We can't close the door to possibilities; we can only look forward to find a solution," says Chris Guerre, owner of the Maple Avenue Market and Farm, and RFFK member. Guerre has worked closely with RFFK since its inception with a special emphasis on building a school and community connection.

The Marshall High School pilot will be funded by the FNS reserve fund, which does not impact the FCPS operating fund. The FNS fund reserves total just under \$16 million for the 2012-2013 school year. Under U.S. Department of the Agriculture regulations, Food and Nutrition Services funds may only be used for the operation or improvement of school food services.

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